Master Plan for Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park

BC Parks

Honourable Ivan Messmer
Minister of Parks

East Kootenay District
Wasa Lake Park, Box 118
Wasa, B.C. V0B 2K0

MOUNT ASSINIBOINE PROVINCIAL PARK
MASTER PLAN

Prepared by

SOUTHERN INTERIOR REGION

Kamloops, B.C.

Ministry of Parks

October, 1989

East Kootenay District
Wasa Lake Park, Box 118
Wasa, B.C. V0B 2K0

MOUNT ASSINIBOINE PROVINCIAL PARK
MASTER PLAN

Prepared by

SOUTHERN INTERIOR REGION

Kamloops, B.C.

Ministry of Parks

October, 1989

90-01761/

Canadian Cataloguing in Publication Data

Main entry under title:
Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park master plan

Cover title: Master plan for Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park.
ISBN 0-7726-1038-X

1. Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park (B.C.) 2. Parks - British Columbia - Planning. 3. Parks - British Columbia - Management. I. British Columbia. Ministry of Parks. Southern Interior Region. II. Title: Master plan for Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park.

FC3815.M68M68 1989 333.78'3'0971165 C89-092270-5
F1089.M68M68 1989

Province of British Columbia

Ministry of Parks
SOUTHERN INTERIOR REGION

MEMORANDUM

To: Mr. J.N. Masselink
Assistant Deputy Minister
MINISTRY OF PARKS

Date: 89.09.14
File: 2-3-2-1-27

Re: Mount Assiniboine Park Master Plan

I am pleased to submit the Mount Assiniboine Park Master Plan for your review and approval.

T.O. Moore
Regional Director

Recommended: _____
District Manager

Recommended: _____
Director, Planning & Conservation Services

Approved: _____
Assistant Deputy Minister

TABLE OF CONTENTS

i

Plan Highlights iv

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Plan Purpose....1
1.2 Management Issues....1
1.3 Background Summary....2

2.0 PARK ROLE

2.1 Regional and Provincial Context....6
2.2 Conservation Role....6
2.3 Outdoor Recreation Role....7

3.0 PARK ZONING

3.1 General Strategy....9
3.2 Park Zoning Plan....9

4.0 RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

4.1 Introduction....12
4.2 Resource Management Objectives and Actions
4.2.1 Land....12
4.2.2 Water....13
4.2.3 Vegetation....15
4.2.4 Fish and Wildlife....17
4.2.5 Cultural Resource Management....19
4.2.6 Visual Resource and Noise Management....19

5.0 VISITOR SERVICES MANAGEMENT

5.1 Introduction....22
5.1.1 Access Strategy....22
5.1.2 Information Strategy....24
5.2 Visitor Opportunities
5.2.1 Product Lines....24
5.2.2 Visitor Activities....25
5.3 Commercial Recreation Services....36
5.4 Management Services
5.4.1 Park Administration....38
5.4.2 Operations Function....38
5.5 Information Services....38

TABLE OF CONTENTS (cont.)

5.6 Marketing
5.6.1 Markets....39
5.6.2 Services....40
5.6.3 Recreation Opportunities....40

6.0 PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

6.1 Capital Development....45
6.2 Resource Services....45
6.3 Visitor Services....46
6.4 Planning....46

Fig. 1 Regional Perspective....iii

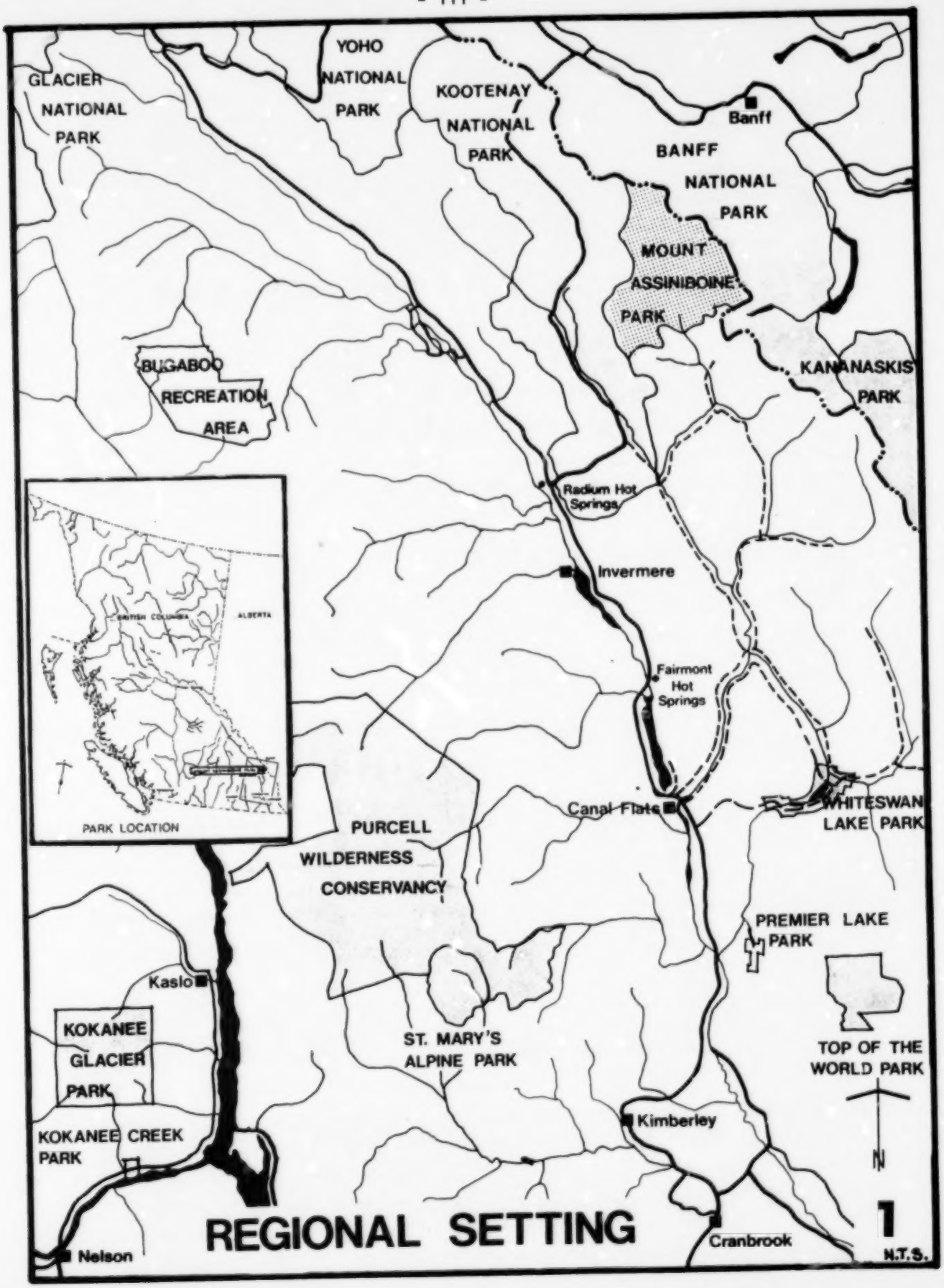
Fig. 2 Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park....vi

Fig. 3 Park Zoning Plan....8

Fig. 4 South Core Area Detail....44

ADDENDUM

At various locations in the Mount Assiniboine Master Plan, reference is made to mountain bicycle access and use. It should be noted that bicycle access to the park is dependent on adjacent National Park policy, particularly as it pertains to the Bryant Creek Fire Road and trail system. As of Spring, 1989, bicycles are not permitted over Assiniboine Pass from Banff National Park. This Canadian Park Service policy may, however, be reviewed at any time. 89.10.13



REGIONAL SETTING

1

N.T.S.

HIGHLIGHTS:

The Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park Master Plan:

.provides comprehensive, long term guidance for the management and development of Mount Assiniboine Park;

.is an approved statement of BC Parks Policy relative to Mount Assiniboine Park;

.defines specific management objectives for:
a) resource conservation;
b) the provision of outdoor recreation services and facilities;

.sets general guidelines for actions aimed at achieving these objectives.

. Mount Assiniboine Park maintains an important role in the BC Parks system as an area which conserves superlative Rocky Mountain natural features and an outdoor recreational resource of international calibre.

. Mount Assiniboine Park supplies a range of very significant outdoor recreation opportunities which contribute to the international attractiveness of the Rocky Mountain park system.

. Two high-use Core areas are identified in the plan; the North Core surrounds the Rock Isle Basin, accessed via Sunshine Village Resort; the South Core has traditionally been recognized around Lake Magog

. A Central Corridor is identified as the connecting territory between the two park Core areas; hiking use of the Corridor is expected to increase.

. The park is zoned to reflect three management levels; Intensive Recreation use within the vicinity of Mount Assiniboine Lodge, Naiset Cabins, the helicopter landing area and the Sunshine Village Ski area; Natural Environment throughout the two Core areas and Central Corridor; and Wilderness zoning in the remainder.

. The importance of special natural and cultural features is recognized in the plan; park zoning highlights particular management objectives for such features as sub-alpine flower meadows, heritage buildings, fossil beds and grizzly bear habitat.

. To conserve important recreation features associated with Assiniboine Creek and Aurora Creek, extension of the park southward is proposed.

. The elimination of commercial water use within the park is stated as a management objective, however, the plan fully recognizes obligations to the existing water licence issued to Sunshine Village.

. The provision of dependable water supplies will increase summer camping use at Magog Lake, hiking use in the Central Corridor, as well as convenience winter operations at Assiniboine Lodge.

. Formulation of a comprehensive Vegetation Management Plan is recommended to address issues related to natural forage supplies, sensitive sub-alpine vegetation, firewood availability, and the consequence of natural wildfire.

. Park fisheries will be protected and enhanced to promote recreational use within the South Core area.

. Park wildlife will be protected and managed to ensure abundant populations and a natural balance of species: a special grizzly bear habitat is recognized along the Simpson River.

. All buildings in the park will maintain rustic architectural design.

. Hiking, helicopter, horse and bicycle are acceptable means of access to Mount Assiniboine Park, although bicycles cannot be used for day-touring within the park.

. Helicopter landings and flight routing will be tightly regulated to protect the back-country atmosphere.

. Redevelopment, relocation and/or redesign of park accommodation facilities will promote increased park use and visitor satisfaction.

. Promotion of private sector operation in the park will continue; several recreation services and outdoor recreation opportunities may be provided by concession.

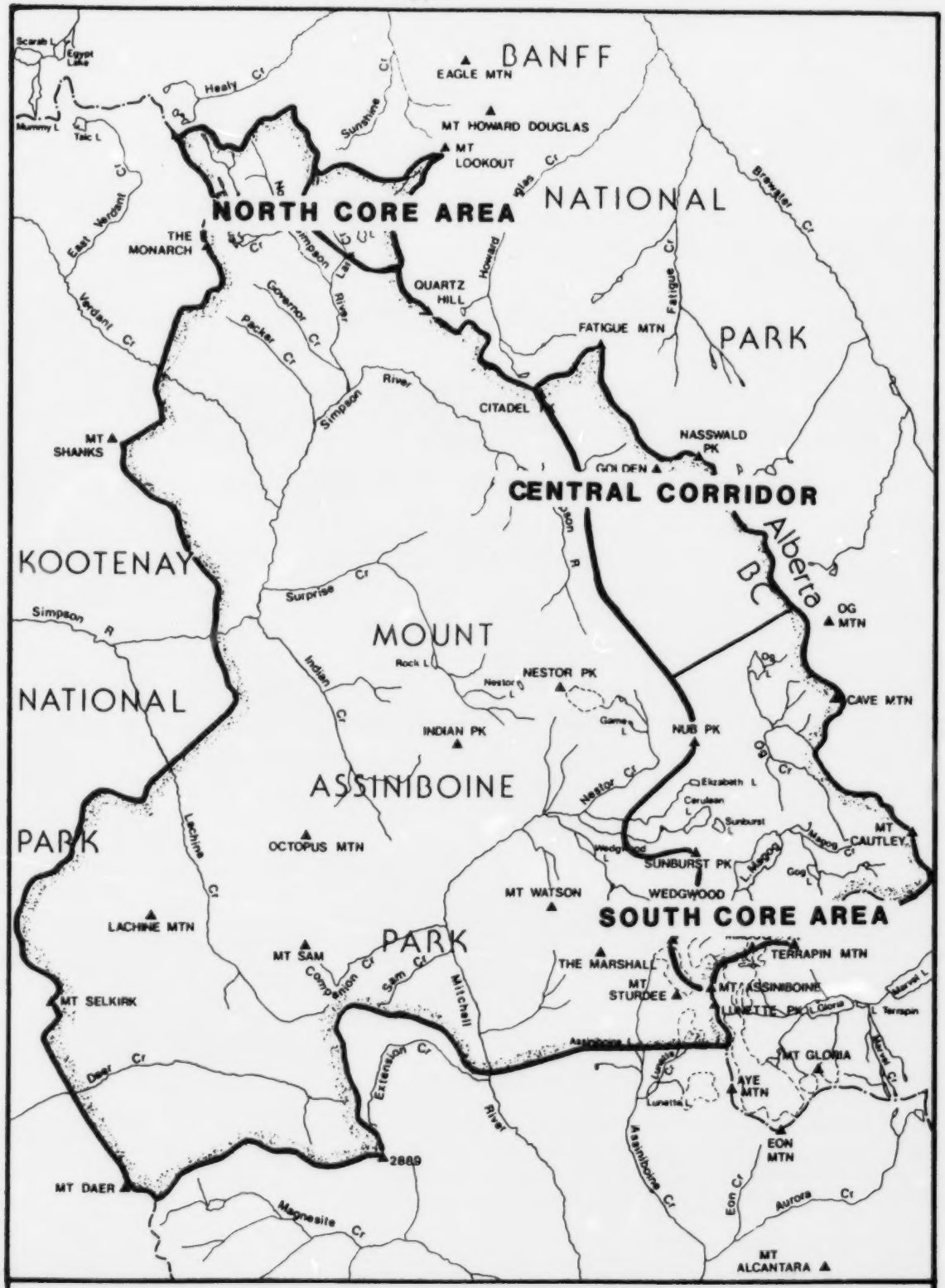
. A park operations building will serve visitors from a site near Mount Assiniboine Lodge and Naiset Cabins.

. A Park Communications Plan will be formulated to identify key interpretive features, in-park sign requirements and out-of-park information strategies to promote awareness of and/or visits to Mount Assiniboine Park.

. "Backcountry" and "Natural and Cultural Resource Appreciation" are the two marketable product lines associated with the park.

. The promotion of outdoor recreation opportunities encourage visitors to participate in the range of activities presented in the park: weekend backcountry camping, 5 day lodge holidays, backcountry hiking, fall fishing, weekend skiing, week/weekend seminars, among others.

. Public participation in the formulation of the Master Plan included meetings with associate groups of the Outdoor Recreation Council of B.C., in-park and out of park planning issue surveys, discussions with permittees and their clients, as well as general public opinion expressed through the 4 Mountain Park planning program undertaken by the Canadian Park Service.



MOUNT ASSINIBOINE PROVINCIAL PARK
Park Features

NORTH

SCALE 1:100,000 or (1 cm = 1 km)

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

2

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 PLAN PURPOSE

This Master Plan defines the role of Mount Assiniboine Park in the BC Park system, establishes objectives for the conservation and management of park resources, and directs comprehensive actions necessary to achieve objectives.

1.2 MANAGEMENT ISSUES

Park Role.

Mount Assiniboine Park's conservation and outdoor recreation roles require scrutiny relative to:

a) its location in British Columbia,
b) the evolving profile of park visitors,
c) its special natural features, and,
d) its relationship to neighbouring Rocky Mountain parks.

Park Expansion.

Expansion of the park has been proposed since the early 1970's. In the Aurora and Assiniboine Creek drainages, park conservation and recreation objectives could be enhanced, with good opportunities for expanding park activities and markets into southeastern BC.

Park Zoning.

Mount Assiniboine Park has developed as two intensively used "core areas" (Magog Lake and Rock Isle Basin), linked by largely undeveloped territory. Wildland areas of the park receive few visits. although their value for conservation is high. An authoritative zoning plan is vital if park management will continue to effectively protect park resources while still presenting attractive outdoor recreation opportunities for park visitors.

Park Access.

Acceptable means of access into Mount Assiniboine Park has frequently presented itself as an issue in Mount Assiniboine Park. Management of access, whether helicopter, horse, foot or bicycle must be addressed in a manner which recognizes the profile, or character, of park visitors as well as the impact on park resources.

Park visitors continue to originate primarily from Alberta, owing mostly to that province's greater population concentrations near the park.

From B.C.'s East Kootenay, the lack of developed access routes constrains most visits. Extension of the Mitchell River resource road may influence future management and marketing of Mount Assiniboine Park.

Natural Resources Management.

Park resources are under pressure from a variety of sources: hunters (guided and resident), loss of habitat (forest encroachment): campers (particularly in the park core), day-hikers (Rock Isle basin), horsemen (guided and private) and permittees (helicopters, Mount Assiniboine Lodge, Sunshine Village). Management of the natural resources must reflect conservation and recreation objectives of the park as well as general BC Park management policy. Also of consideration is the park's situation adjacent two high-profile National Parks, where preservation objectives are paramount.

Park Visitors.

Since adoption of Interim Policy Statements for Mount Assiniboine Park, changes in economics and lifestyles have dramatically altered the profile of park visitors. Mount Assiniboine, although continuing its appeal as a classic mountain-climb, has become an increasingly attractive destination for the middle-aged recreationist. Moreover, destination resorts such as Mount Assiniboine Lodge and Sunshine Village have generally attracted clients who are much less dependent on their physical capability to hike and camp.

Visitor Services.

Related to changes in visitor type has been a change in the demand for visitor services. Managers need to consider the park's capabilities and role to carefully balance the demands of each market group. In addition, the most efficient, effective manner in which to present these services and facilities needs to be addressed, whether through the expansion of commercial services, Park services and facilities or other method.

The concessioned operation at Mount Assiniboine Lodge, a rarity in the BC Park system, and its interrelationship with the park must be considered in planning. Special management policies are required to ensure acceptable blending of the entrepreneur philosophy with BC Parks' commitment to resource conservation and public recreation.

1.3 BACKGROUND REPORT SUMMARY

see Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park,
Master Plan Background Document; August, 1987

Climate.

- Humid Continental-Cool Summer climate region; Mountain influences
- January Mean temperature: -11c ; July Mean temperature: 8-12c
- snowfall maximums: December-January : rainfall maximums: June-July

Topography/Geology.

- Park is entirely within the Continental Ranges Regional Landscape
- flat lying sedimentary rocks of upper Precambrian/lower Palezoic

- Mount Assiniboine is the 6th highest peak in the Rockies (3618 m)
- two fossil beds exist in the South Core: others probably exist
- Karst topography around Og Lake, Valley of the Rocks and Cave mtn.

Watersheds.

- two main watersheds: Mitchell River drains the south half of the park, Simpson River drains the north half: both flow from the Continental Divide
- June is the highest run-off month: ice conditions from Nov.- Mar.
- Og and Magog Lakes have subterranean drainage, considerable fluctuations in water levels

Vegetation.

- Park lies within the Engelmann Spruce - Subalpine Fir (1200-2450m) and the Alpine Tundra (2450+ m) biogeoclimatic Zones
- ESSF species: Engelmann Spruce, Subalpine Fir, Alpine Larch, Whitebark Pine, Lodgepole Pine, Douglas Fir, Mountain Hemlock, - AT species: Mountain Avens. alpine Bluegrass, Moss Campion, willows, heather, forget-me-not

Fish.

- lake fishery concentrated in the two core areas
- species: Yellowstone cutthroat trout (all South core lakes, Wedgewood Lake and Rock Lake)
  Rainbow trout (Cerulean Lake, Sunburst Lake)
  Dolly Varden char, Eastern brook trout (North core lakes)

Wildlife.

- 84 species of birds inhabit the park environs, based on sightings
- Columbian ground squirrels are very common in the core area
- 10 species of carnivore including wolves, black bear, grizzly bear. weasel, cougar, lynx.
- 6 species of ungulates: elk, mule deer, white-tailed deer, moose, mountain goat, Rocky Mtn. bighorn sheep

Cultural.

- probable low density of prehistoric and historic sites, no sites formally recorded although area was visited 10,000 years ago·
- heritage sites: Wheeler's Wonder Lodge (Naiset) (1924), Assiniboine Lodge (1929) Sunburst (1928)

Visual and Recreation.

- visual highlights: Mt. Assiniboine massif, alpine and subalpine meadows in the Magog to Rock Isle corridor, Wonder Pass
- viewsheds protected to the north, east and west only
- recreation feature highlights: alpine and subalpine areas (Og, Sunshine meadows), rivers and major creeks (upper Simpson), fish and wildlife populations (notably Elk and mtn. goat)

- most highly rated features occur in the Magog Basin, the Magog-Rock Isle corridor and the Rock Isle Lake basin.

Recreation Opportunities.

- Backcountry: Accommodations (lodge, cabin, campsite), day-hiking and interpretive opportunities(from accomodations),backpacking, fishing, horsepacking/riding, hunting, mountaineering, ski-touring
- Special Features: cultural features (history), interpretive features (biology, geology), viewing

Existing Facilities.

- 10 camping areas (75 campsites), including the main camp at Magog
- 6 roofed accommodation sites (60 beds), including Mt. Assiniboine Lodge
- day-use facilities at Rock Isle basin, including interpretive facilities and sanitation
- 160 km of horse and hiking access trails: Assiniboine Pass, Wonder Pass, Mitchell River, Simpson River, Citadel Pass, Surprise Creek
- guide-outfitters cabins: Mitchell River and Police Meadows

Land Management.

- two guide/outfitting territories; Mitchell and Simpson River - one trapline (not active); Mitchell River drainage
- no hunting in the park core area around Magog Basin

Visitor Information.

- mostly Alberta and outside B.C. visitors, owing to access from Banff National Park
- Assiniboine Lodge advertises across Canada and the U.S.; some European markets
- summer users originate from farther than the winter users
- over 40,000 summer day-use visits via Sunshine village, Banff
- Satisfaction surveys indicate:
  - .visitors are generally satisfied, except re: signs and fees
  - .things most enjoyed: unspoiled country, quiet and remoteness
  - .largest proportion of visits were for 3-5 days with 2-3 people 50% Alberta origin; 33% B.C. origin
- overnight visits have remained stable, day visits have increased (Sunshine Village)
- August and March are the only months that achieve full occupancy
- generally two market groups: young/physically fit, mid-aged/physically limited

Future Trends.

- most markets will continue to lie east of the park: without substantial capital investment, Kootenay markets cannot be won
- popularity of helicopter access will continue to grow
- demand for cabin and lodge accommodation will remain strong
- trend toward backcountry and nature tours/holidays will continue

- higher profile of the National Parks will continue to limit awareness of Mount Assiniboine as a BC Provincial Park
- use by those seeking "wilderness" will continue to decline, however those seeking a hospitable backcountry experience may increase
- most use will continue to focus on the core areas

Outside Influences.

- Forest management in the lower Mitchell River drainage will influence future access from the East Kootenay
- Magnesite mining in the Mitchell River/Aurora Creek confluence area influences access potential, park expansion proposals and recreation values

2.0 PARK ROLE

2.1 REGIONAL AND PROVINCIAL CONTEXT
see also Background Document Section 1.0

- Mount Assiniboine Park abuts the BC/Alberta border on the western slopes of the Rocky Mountains in the central East Kootenay region.

- Mount Assiniboine Park is a significant part of the world renowned Canadian Rocky Mountain Provincial and National park system. Several major backcountry parks are located within the vicinity of Mount Assiniboine (see Figure 1), noteably Banff, Kootenay and Yoho National Parks and Kananaskis Country (Alberta). Top of the World Provincial Park (BC Parks) and Height of the Rockies Wilderness Area (BC Forests) lie within the Rockies south of Mount Assiniboine.

- The park is situated proximate to major population centres in both British Columbia and Alberta (Cranbrook, Kimberley, Invermere; Calgary, Canmore, Banff).

- Based on a range of transportation options, the park is a convenient backcountry destination for Albertans and international visitors to the Rocky Mountain parks. Visits to the south core are generally for fly-in weekends and extended backpack or hosted holidays while the north core, directly accessible via Sunshine Village, attracts day and weekend visitors throughout the year.

2.2 CONSERVATION ROLE

Discussion:

- Mt. Assiniboine, the highest peak in the southern Rockies, maintains international stature as a symbol of the Canadian Rocky Mountains: "the Matterhorn of the Rockies".

- Natural features in Mount Assiniboine Park, including wildlife, geology and vegetation are of particular significance to the scientific community as examples of the Rocky Mountains western slope, particularly relating to the Continental Ranges Regional Landscape. The park protects most biological components of the southern Rocky Mountains and conserves the area's attractive wilderness atmosphere.

- The park presents an extensive range of summer and winter recreation opportunities which capitalize on the wide, open valleys, unique mountain meadows, forested areas and mountain slopes.

Role:

1. Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park conserves a superlative Rocky Mountain landscape and topographic feature which is a world-recognized symbol of the Canadian Rockies.

2. Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park maintains a significant role as part of a multi-jurisdictional mountain park system which conserves representative portions of the Continental Ranges Regional Landscape and related biophysical elements of the Rocky Mountain Natural Region.

3. Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park conserves a nationally significant backcountry recreation area for summer and winter recreation activity.

2.3 OUTDOOR RECREATION ROLE

Discussion:

-Owing to the topographic variety of the park which includes gentle terrain as well as prominent mountain peaks, a wide range of attractive outdoor recreation opportunities is feasible: mountaineering, backpacking, horsepacking, hunting, fishing, nature appreciation and ski touring.

-Based on its proximity to major tourist centres in the Canadian Rockies and the variety of outdoor recreation opportunities presented in the park by both the public and private sector, Mount Assiniboine Park attracts a wide range of visitors with varying interests and capabilities.

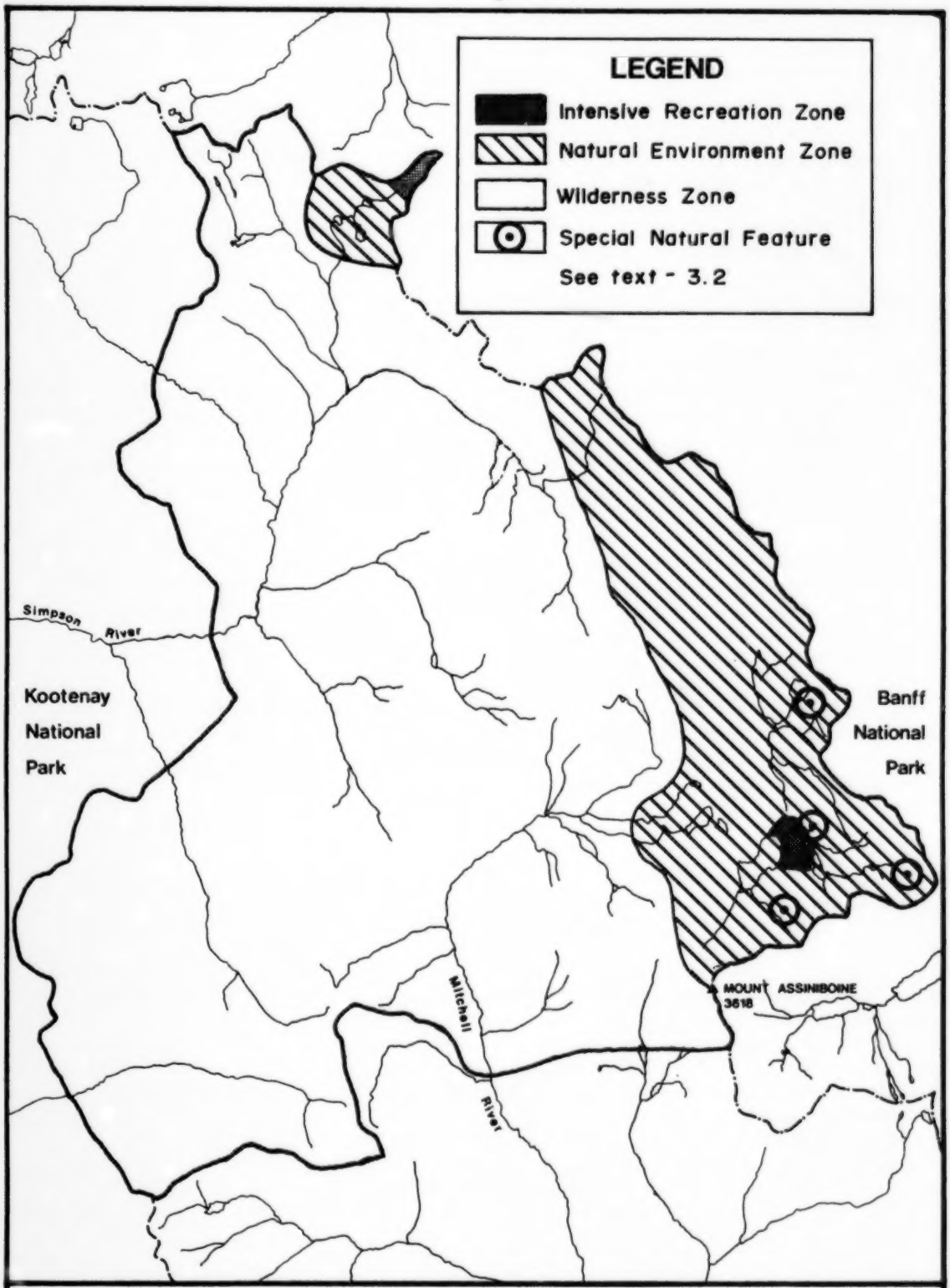
-Natural features in Mount Assiniboine Park, including wildlife, geology and vegetation are general interest to all visitors and of particular significance to the scientific community as examples of the Rocky Mountains western slope.

Role:

1. Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park presents a nationally significant backcountry recreation area which can accommodate a wide range of attractive outdoor recreation activities in a relatively safe and accessible mountain environment.

2. Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park presents an international tourist destination which contributes to the overall tourism significance of the Canadian Rocky Mountains.

3. Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park presents educational opportunities to all varieties of visitor.



MOUNT ASSINIBOINE PROVINCIAL PARK
Park Zoning Plan

NORTH

SCALE 1:100,000 or (1 cm = 1 km)

3

3.0 PARK ZONING

3.1 GENERAL STRATEGY

The zoning scheme for BC provincial parks is intended to divide park land area into logical management units based on uniform and consistent management objectives.

At Mount Assiniboine, the following zone management objectives direct access, facilities and recreation activities which are compatible with the natural resources found in each specific area.

3.2 PARK ZONING PLAN

3.2.1 Intensive Recreation Zone:

To provide for a variety of readily accessible, facility oriented outdoor recreation opportunities: implying at Mount Assiniboine Park:

- areas of high public use and concentrated development
- accommodation and service buildings
- designated helicopter landing points
- designated downhill ski area

Management Objective:
.to recognize and manage this zone of the park as a high use, helicopter or ski lift accessed area which is vulnerable to the impacts associated with serviced, extended stay visits or downhill ski area operation

Includes:
.immediate area of Mount Assiniboine Lodge and Naiset Cabins
.Sunshine Village ski area boundary

Use:
.multi-party roofed accommodation sites
.park headquarters and service area
.helicopter landing sites
.downhill ski runs and towers
.Type 1 and 2 trails

Special Feature Subzone:

i) Heritage

Management Objective:
.to recognize the heritage value of these buildings and to ensure their continued presentation to and use by the public as heritage features or architectural facsimilies

Includes:
.Mount Assiniboine Lodge and associated out-buildings

.Naiset Cabins
.Sunburst Cabin (located within the Natural Environment Zone)

3.2.2 Natural Environment Zone:

To provide for a variety of easily accessible, off-road outdoor recreation opportunities in a largely undisturbed natural environment; implying at Mount Assiniboine Park:

- use levels which preclude a sense of isolation
- areas which are generally accessible on a day-use basis
- moderate levels of development for visitor convenience, trails, campsites, shelters
- management priority to maintain the natural environment

Management Objective:
.to ensure maintenance of the natural environment while providing basic visitor facilities to enhance a high quality recreation experience

Includes:
.South Core Area (Lake Magog)
.North Core Area (Rock Isle Basin)
.Golden Valley/Valley of the Rocks (Central Corridor)

Use:
.hike-in campgrounds, shelters
.group campgrounds
.Type 2 and 3 hiking trails
.pack trails and facilities

Special Feature Subzones:

i) Vegetation

Management Objective:
.to provide sensitive vegetation features with special protection from human impact and/or destruction

Includes:
.Sunshine Meadows
.Mt. Cautley alpine
.Terrapin Bowl

ii) Physical Features

Management Objective:
.to ensure an adequate land area to protect important landscape resources and, where necessary, to intensely regulate recreation use within this subzone to protect landscape features from human impact and/or destruction

Includes:

.Magog fossil beds
.Og Lake/Cave Mtn. karst features
.Mount Assiniboine massif

3.2.3 Wilderness Zone:

To provide for backcountry recreation opportunities in a remote, undisturbed natural environment, with emphasis on a wilderness atmosphere; implying at Mount Assiniboine Park:

- low use and a complete sense of isolation
- remote areas not easily visited on a day-use basis
- limited development for user convenience and for protection of the environment; trails, campsites, shelters
- management priority to maintain the natural environment

Management Objective:
.to protect and maintain the wilderness atmosphere of the zone while providing basic visitor facilities to accommodate low levels of use.

Includes:
.all other areas of the park as illustrated in Figure 4

Use:
.backcountry campsites
.guide-outfitter cabins and corrals
.Type 3 and 4 hiking trails, pack trails

Special Feature Subzone:

Wildlife

Management Objective:
.to recognize the special value of the Simpson River grizzly bear habitat and regulate visitor use for the protection of grizzly populations

Includes:
.grizzly bear habitat in the middle Simpson River valley

4.0 RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Park management policy statements outlined in the Master Plan are derived from broader policy directives adopted by the Ministry and/or legislated by the Park Act.

As guided by the Zoning Plan:

The protection of rare and/or endangered natural and cultural resources is paramount; others will be managed to enhance the outdoor recreational value of Mount Assiniboine Park.

4.2 RESOURCE MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES AND ACTIONS

4.2.1 Land Management

see also Background Document Sections 2 and 8

Objective:

To ensure that adequate land is managed under Class A status to conserve a large, natural area which enhances representation of the Continental Ranges Regional Landscape.

i) Boundaries and Classification

Discussion:

-southern boundaries of the park do not entirely contain Mount Assiniboine or the associated topographic and recreation features of the Assiniboine Creek and Aurora Creek valleys (Marvel Pass, Assiniboine Lake, Lunette Lake)

-natural features presented within the adjacent Rocky Mountain National Parks have been internationally recognized; the parks have been collectively designated by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) as a World Heritage Site

ACTIONS:

.nominate the park for inclusion in the Rocky Mountains World Heritage Site

WILDERNESS ZONE

.extend the park boundary southward to include the Assiniboine and upper Aurora Creek watersheds, thus conserving significant natural habitats and recreation features, including the southern flanks of Mt. Assiniboine and Assiniboine Lake

.establish the extension as Recreation Area with Class A Park as the ultimate classification

ii) Inholdings and Tenure

Discussion:

-no private inholdings or facilities occur within the park

-a portion of the Sunshine Village ski area boundary is contained within the North core; winter and summer operations are covered under a Park Use Permit

-although some areas of the park are closed to hunting, guiding tenure exists throughout the park; guiding and trapping tenure exists within the proposed extension area (M.U. 4-25)

-to date there has been no trespass use identified in the park

-in the vicinity of the proposed park extension, active forest and mining industries with long-term operating commitments may affect park management in the interim

ACTIONS:

.retain all park lands and park facilities as Crown

.retain guide/outfitter territory boundaries throughout the park; special use regulations may be applied (eg. specific hunting regulations; recreation guiding only)

NORTH CORE INTENSIVE RECREATION ZONE

.manage the land as a ski area, in accordance with the Provincial Ski Area Policy

.manage the summer use area under provision of the Sunshine Summer Use Plan

WILDERNESS ZONE

.manage minerals within the expanded park area under the Mineral Tenure Act

4.2.2 Water Management
see also Background Document Section 2.2

Objective:

To protect and maintain the quality and quantity of natural water resources in Mount Assiniboine Park.

i) Quantity

Discussion:

-Under Park Use Permit, Sunshine Village has historically been a commercial user of water from Rock Isle Lake

-a subterranean water regime maintains supply to all lakes within the North Core area

-an undependable water source currently supplies the Magog campground, particularly scarce during extended rain-free periods

-Mount Assiniboine Lodge and Naiset camp maintain an adequate summer domestic water supply via a piped, gravity feed system which has an insignificant impact on water resources

-in the Central Corridor, hiking and camping opportunities are limited due to a lack of potable ground water supply

-no other water rights, flooding reserves, or similar encumbrances exist in the park

ACTIONS:

SOUTH CORE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT ZONE

.ensure an adequate and dependable water supply to the Magog campground

NORTH CORE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT ZONE

.restrict Sunshine Village water supply to terms of the existing agreement: 5000 gallons per day or less

.encourage alternate, non-park sources of water for future Sunshine Village developments

CENTRAL CORRIDOR NATURAL ENVIRONMENT ZONE

.investigate and develop potential sources for drinking water supply to hikers within the Central Corridor

ii) Quality

Discussion:

-the park protects the headwaters of two significant tributaries of the upper Kootenay River which flows into Kootenay National Park

-Gog Lake (South Core), Rock Isle, Grizzly and Laryx Lakes (North Core) are natural water features of special attraction

-excepting Mount Assiniboine Lodge which maintains a septic system, all toilet facilities in the park are outhouses

-within the North Core, intensive recreation activity has potential to impair ground water quality

ACTIONS:

.locate pit toilets at all intensively visited areas of the park

.ensure sewage/waste disposal methods do not impair water resources

NORTH CORE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT ZONE

.maintain pit toilets for day-use visitors

4.2.3 Vegetation Management
see also Background Document Section 2.3.1

General Objective:

To conserve park vegetation, particularly unique vegetation communities and representative species of the natural landscape

Discussion:

-subalpine vegetation exists throughout both the North and South core areas which is sensitive to intensive recreation activity: permanent vegetation scars exist particularly within the Intensive Recreation Zone

-extensive, increasing use in the North Core area has potential to seriously impact the vegetation resource

-an intensive trail reclamation/re-vegetation program in the Core Areas has been effective in re-establishing vegetation

-during spring and summer months, Banff Park elk herds range over meadowlands in the South Core area

-private-party horse use in the South core area has lessened significantly from the previous decade, thus reducing demand for forage

-within the Wilderness zone, forage has generally been depleted by the fall, thereby limiting the resource for use by horses and ungulate populations

-forest cover in the west half of the park includes a mix of spruce, pine and fir of various age classes; subalpine vegetation features are essentially concentrated in the east half of the park

-firewood heating demands are increasing according to winter use of the park; South Core area supplies are being depleted rapidly

-to date, epidemic forest insect and/or disease occurance has not been noted as a vegetation management issue

-wildfire within the park has been low; evidence of reforested burns exist in Lachine Creek and lower Surprise Creek

ACTIONS:

.ensure immediate suppression of wildfire: this policy to be reviewed following formulation of a park-specific fire management plan

.directed by specific zone management guidelines, formulate a vegetation management plan to address:

-inventory, monitoring and management of special vegetation species
-forage resources, forage competition and Animal Unit Month (AUM) allocations for domestic stock
-a park-specific fire management/suppression policy, particularly concerning wildfire in the Wilderness Zone

.direct all walking/hiking to identified trails for the purpose of conserving sensitive subalpine vegetative

.rehabilitate all vegetation scars resulting from the abandonment or realignment of all trails and facilities

.ensure protection of sensitive shoreline vegetation; direct use to less vulnerable shoreline areas

.permit removal of vegetation only for authorized scientific study or presentation

.undertake no large scale clearing of disease/insect infested forest stands

.authorize domestic grazing within designated areas determined by the vegetation management plan

SOUTH CORE INTENSIVE RECREATION ZONE

.disallow firewood cutting within the zone

.designate helicopter landing sites to protect vegetation from further scarring and compaction

SOUTH CORE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT ZONE

.phase out firewood cutting within the zone; seek alternative sources from outside the zone

.distribute concentrated recreation activity (eg. group camping, intensely impacted campsites) to allow periods of vegetation recovery

WILDERNESS ZONE

.consider a "leave be" management philosophy for wildfire within the zone, based on an fire management plan

.permit firewood cutting within the zone as a supply source for park facilities

4.2.4 Fish and Wildlife Management
see also Background Document Section 2.3.2/2.2.3

General Objective:

To protect and maintain the natural diversity of fish and wildlife populations presently found within the park.

i) Fish

Discussion:

-all fish populations in the park descend from artificial stocking programs

-in general the natural park fishery is considered moderately productive and sensitive to high-use pressure and over-harvesting because of the limited spawning environment and slow growth rates

-Cerulean Lake is noted for its trophy trout populations; Gog Lake for its splendid fly fishing environment

ACTIONS:

.continue to liaise with the BC Environment Fisheries section regarding fish management and user regulation

SOUTH CORE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT ZONE

.assure a sustained fishery through natural recruitment, conservative regulation and artificial stocking, particularly:

-a trophy catch and release for Cerulean Lake
-wild fishery for other lakes in the zone

.consider a put and take fishery at Elizabeth Lake and, if feasible, Og Lake, with liberal catch limits applied

NORTH CORE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT ZONE

.retain a fishing closure on lakes within the North Core (see 5.2.2i)

WILDERNESS ZONE

.assure a sustained fishery through conservative regulation

ii) Wildlife

Discussion:

-the park's shared boundaries with two National Parks requires consideration when managing wildlife populations

-grizzly and black bear, elk, goat, sheep and ground squirrel are wildlife species with high public profile in the park

-open meadowlands within the South Core area are important summer range for Banff National Park elk herds: these herds are being studied, and managed cooperatively with the Canadian Parks Service

-supply of ungulate forage can be affected by domestic demand

-bear conflict with man has not been recorded in the past, although some areas of the park have been identified as important grizzly bear habitat

-around park accommodation facilities, the natural population balance of rodents has been upset by human development and lack of predation

ACTIONS:

.continue to liaise with other agencies (federal, Alberta and BC provincial) relative to the study and management of wildlife species which range both inside and outside the park

.monitor wildife inventories regularly to ensure abundant natural population levels and balance

.protect and manage all park wildlife to sustain natural behaviour

.assess bear problems individually to determine management options (relocation, killing) which ensure public safety. In the Wildlife Features subzone, options will relate solely to visitor management (eg. trail closure, re-routing)

.regulate domestic animals where necessary to protect park wildlife values

.ensure adequate grazing opportunities for wildlife; no competition for forage between wildlife and domestic animals will occur

4.2.5 Cultural Resource Management
see also Background Document Section 3.0

General Objective:

To identify, study and protect examples of the natural and cultural resources evident within Mount Assiniboine Park.

i) Prehistoric

Discussion:

-no evidence of prehistoric cultural sites within the park has been found

ACTIONS:

.promote the study of prehistoric occurrences within the park

.identify and record prehistoric evidence as found

ii) Historic

Discussion:

-Simpson River was first explored in 1841 for the Hudson Bay Co.

-buildings within the South Core area provide physical historic evidence of activity and tourist use at Assiniboine

ACTIONS:

.investigate additional historic remains as found throughout the park; assess their significance prior to their alteration

.permit exploration of the park for the purpose of historic research

.ensure the continued preservation and presentation of all structures within the South Core area as representations of early tourist use at Assiniboine

4.2.6 Visual Resource and Noise Management
see also Background Document Section 4.0

General Objective:

To ensure that management activities, visitor use and park facilities and operations pose minimal impact to visual resources in the park.

To minimize noise disturbances in the backcountry setting.

Discussion:

-the park exhibits many exceptionally scenic features of high visual and photographic quality

-the North Core area offers tremendous viewing opportunities, most areas of the park are visible from the Continental Divide at this location

-without proper design, park improvements and support facilities potentially degrade the visual resource: water distribution lines, helipads, architectural inconsistencies, braided trail patterns, et cetera

-over the next 20 years, logging and mining activity within the Mitchell River drainage, outside park (and proposed park) boundaries, will significantly alter the visual landscape as viewed from Mount Assiniboine and from areas within the Wilderness zone

-although BC Parks has no authority over sight-seeing airplane trips which tend to disturb peace and quiet within park boundaries, landings and related flight paths are subject to special permit and can be controlled

-operational activity within the Core areas of the park can disrupt the aural environment significantly (pumps, chainsaws, generators)

ACTIONS:

.locate and design all facilities to recognize their visual impact on the surrounding landscape

.minimize disturbing noises which result from park operational activity

SOUTH CORE INTENSIVE RECREATION ZONE
SOUTH CORE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT ZONE

.regulate helicopter landing days, times and numbers to minimize noise disturbance in the park

.designate Assiniboine Pass as the primary flight route into the park

WILDERNESS ZONE

.liaise with outside agencies to minimize the visual impact to visitors of logging and mining operation within the Mitchell River valley

5.0 VISITOR SERVICES MANAGEMENT
see also Background Document Section 6.0

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Generally, recreational use patterns in the Rocky Mountain Parks have evolved as use levels, tourism and technology advanced. Distant wilderness areas such as Mount Assiniboine Park, are now accessible by foot, horse, bicycle, even chairlift, from roads which penetrate deep into the mountains from all sides. Increased dependence on helicopters to transport backcountry visitors and tourists has profoundly affected the management of these special environments. Current park use is indicative of the advancing trends which must be recognized and managed in the future.

As guided by the Zoning Plan:

Visitor Services management will capitalize on the park's outstanding value as an outdoor recreation resource which maintains international visitor appeal and which offers an exciting range of visitor opportunities.

5.1.1 Access Strategy

Public access to Mount Assiniboine Park will be permitted by a variety of methods, all of which complement park management objectives and comply with the park zoning scheme.

i) Hiking/ Skiing Access

Discussion:

-because of market groups and ease of auto-access to trailheads, primary hiking access to the South Core area will continue to originate from points east of the park, via Banff National Park (Sunshine Village, Bryant Creek) and Kananaskis Country (Spray Lake)

-summer route marketing emphasis on the Assiniboine Pass Trail has resulted in fewer visitors experiencing the attractive, in-park Central Corridor zone; winter routes remain safer through Assiniboine Pass

-standard route information is not consistent at all trailheads

-road extension in the Mitchell River valley may provide improved opportunities for hiking access from eastern BC

BC Parks will permit:

.hiking access to the South Core area from Sunshine Village via the Central Corridor-Great Divide Trail; discourage ski access via this route

.skiing access to the South Core area from Kananaskis Country/Banff National Park via Assiniboine Pass

.hiking access to all parts of the park via designated trails

ii) Horseback Riding Access

Discussion:

-horseback riding within the park is a historic recreation activity; horse use for access has been substantially reduced in recent years

-in adjoining parklands, only certain routes to Assiniboine are designated for horses or other domestic pack animals

-special trailhead facilities for pack animals are often required

BC Parks will permit:

.horse access to Mount Assiniboine Park via Assiniboine Pass, Mitchell River and Simpson River - Surprise Creek trails

iii) Bicycle Access

Discussion:

-Canadian Parks Service regulations impact on access of bicycles to Mount Assiniboine Park; Bryant Creek Fire Road (Trail) is designated as a bicycle route through Banff Park to Assiniboine Pass

-use of bikes for activity other than park access is inconsistent with park objectives

BC Parks will permit:

.bicycle access to and from the South Core area only via Assiniboine Pass

iv) Air Access

Discussion:

-demand for helicopter access to the park is increasing: transporting of day-visitors to the park has been disallowed

-other than on Lake Magog, all lakes within the park are too small for float plane use

-use of air access impacts visually and aurally on other users and impairs park management objectives for conservation

-inconsistent use of airspace and landing sites may be hazardous: increased landings of helicopters has had negative impact on park vegetation

BC Parks will permit:

.helicopter access only for the purpose of transporting overnight visitors and supplies to the South Core Intensive Recreation Zone

.helicopter landing only at designated helipads, constructed at Mount Assiniboine Lodge and Naiset Cabins according to government standards and guidelines

5.1.2 Information Strategy

It is the intent to ensure that information regarding:

-the outstanding resource values that are protected in the park:
-the superb outdoor recreation products, facilities and services which are offered by BC Parks and park concessionaires,
-the safety of park visitors,

is available and widely distributed to park visitors as well as those contemplating a visit to Mount Assiniboine Park.

At Home.

-through all forms of media (literature, journals, art, photography, video) which spotlight Mount Assiniboine Park
-through BC Parks awareness campaigns within BC and Alberta
-through BC Parks brochures and the brochures of surrounding parks
-through BC and Alberta tourist centres
-through information material available from park permittees

En Route.

-through road and trail signing to designated access points (cooperatively with surrounding park agencies and permittees)
-through transport concessionaires (helicopter)

In Park.

-through orientation/information/warning signs
-through visitor programs and activities

5.2 VISITOR OPPORTUNITIES

see also Background Document Section 5.0

5.2.1 Product Lines

Two significant product lines are offered to visitors within Mount Assiniboine Park:

a) Backcountry
b) Natural and Cultural Resource Appreciation

a) BACKCOUNTRY.

The exceptional quality of this backcountry environment and the diverse range of backcountry visitor activities make the park nothing less than an international attraction.

b) NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCE APPRECIATION.

Tremendous opportunities are presented to experience the many natural and cultural resources which characterize Mount Assiniboine Park. Interpretation of these features fosters better understanding of the park environment which results in a more satisfactory experience for the park visitor.

5.2.2 Visitor Activities (Products)

General Objective:

To deliver an extensive range of outdoor recreation opportunities and activities to specific user groups for the purpose of increasing enjoyment and appreciation of the superb backcountry and wilderness resources protected in Mount Assiniboine Park.

i) BACKCOUNTRY

Backcountry Accommodation.

Discussion:

-surveys of campers in the park's primary backcountry campground accommodation at Magog Lake indicate low "value for fee" satisfaction; visitor characteristics and demands have changed since initial campground development

-the degree of campsite sophistication relates to the zone in which the campsite is located: fewer services are demanded in remote areas of the park

-special types of backcountry accommodation are required by certain user groups: large group sites, sites with horse facilities, shelter for mountain climbers, shelter for guided clients

-during the summer season, Mount Assiniboine Lodge accommodates clients who desire special quality service or those which may not be capable of enjoying an extended backcountry stay because of physical limitations

-during the winter season, the Lodge accomodates a broader market segment, catering to individuals, families and groups which desire comfortable amenities and guided services

-the Naiset Cabins provide rudimentary backcountry shelter for summer and winter visitors who desire roofed accommodation without additional services

-capacity of the Naiset Cabins is limited by space availability for sleeping and cooking, concerns for public safety and structural conditions; winter capacity is generally more restricted

ACTIONS:

SOUTH CORE INTENSIVE RECREATION ZONE

.provide full-service, high-standard backcountry accommodation at Mount Assiniboine Lodge

.maintain the lodge community (number of buildings) at current levels. Building use, client services and operations details are to be specified in an approved 5 year operating plan.

.provide minimal-service huts for use by the general public at Naiset Camp; upgrade standards for safety and preservation

.limit Naiset guest capacity to a safe, seasonally adjusted level; no expansion is forecast

.formulate an annual management plan, which includes, for Naiset Cabins, the following:
-seasonal capacities
-public safety and emergency response
-maintenance requirements

.construct an central cooking/warming shelter at Naiset

SOUTH CORE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT ZONE

.upgrade Magog Rim Campground, retaining existing capacity which is considered to be adequate, to better satisfy customer expectation and demand:

-redefine and formalize campsites for increased privacy, ease of service and reduced impact
-provide up to 2 centrally located cooking shelters with stoves and picnic tables
-provide a centralized water supply system (see 4.2.2i)
-provide group camping opportunities over a portion of the campground

.relocate O'Brien's horse campgound to a location more convenient to the Assiniboine Pass horse trail; manage for a dual role: horse groups and hiking groups

.provide defined campsites at Og Lake as accommodation for hikers to/from the Central Corridor

.provide basic alpine shelter on the flanks of Mt. Assiniboine (RC Hind Hut)

NORTH CORE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT ZONE

.no overnight accommodation will be provided or permitted

CENTRAL CORRIDOR NATURAL ENVIRONMENT ZONE

.provide defined, low-service campsites at Porcupine Meadow as the only accommodation for hikers in the Central Corridor; include a centralized open shelter

WILDERNESS ZONE

.provide designated, low-impact campgrounds for hiking and horse riding parties at:

-Surprise Creek Outlet
-Scoup Camp
-Police Meadows
-Rock Lake
-Wedgewood Lake (subject to further assessment)
-Mitchell Meadow

.provide designated, low-impact campgrounds for hiking parties only at:

-Eohippus Lake
-Marvel Pass (proposed park expansion)

.permit rustic cabin shelters to serve guide-outfitters and park visitors at:

-Mitchell River
-Simpson River (Surprise Creek)
-Police Meadows

Day-Hiking.

Discussion:

-Sunshine Village hosts over 40,000 day visitors who hike into the beautiful North Core area of Mount Assiniboine Park during the tourist months of July and August

-plans for expansion at Sunshine Village have significant impact on North Core area management

-the current development level of day-hiking trails and facilities in the North Core area achieves management objectives for the zone; the area's environmental carrying capacity is significantly more critical than it's social carrying capacity

-potential exists to host handicapped (wheelchair) day-access to points within the North Core area via Sunshine Village trails

-In the South Core area Mount Assiniboine Lodge and BC Parks host approximately 5000 summer guests who day-hike individually or in groups from their accommodation base

-1986 Surveys indicate day-hiking in the South Core area as a major attraction to visitors; several superlative destination features exist, signing to these sites requires utmost clarity

ACTIONS:

SOUTH CORE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT ZONE

.maintain minimum Type 3 trails, except over sensitive alpine vegetation, for trails to all major day hiking destinations in the South Core area:

-the "Nublet" Vista Circle Trail
-Mount Cautley Skyline Trail
-Lake Magog Shoreline Circle Trail
-Gog Lake and Waterfall Trail
-3 Lakes Circle Trail (Sunburst, Cerulean, Elizabeth)
-Windy Ridge Trail

NORTH CORE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT ZONE

.maintain minimum Type 2 trails within the presently developed day-use area

.cooperate with other trail managers (Banff National Park and/or Sunshine Village Resort) regarding further refinement of routing, trail standard and visitor facilities which may become required

Backpacking.

Discussion:

-in most cases, backpacking in Mount Assiniboine Park is for the purpose of getting to the South Core area as an accommodation base from which to undertake other backcountry activity

-promotion of extended wilderness treks through Mount Assiniboine Park must compete with a multitude of exceptionally attractive, well known Rocky Mountain backpacking routes

-Eohippus Lake offers potential as part of the Egypt Lake backpacking circuit in Banff National Park

-backpacking facilities along the Mitchell and Simpson River trail systems are rarely serviced or patroled; visitor safety from grizzly bear is a management concern within the mid-Simpson River valley

-of most potential for in-park backpacking promotion is the Central Corridor (Great Divide) Trail which traverses the spectacular Rocky Mountain Divide and links the popular North and South Core areas

ACTIONS:

.negotiate a formal agreement between BC Parks, Canadian Parks Service and Alberta Parks regarding signing, trail standards and trailhead facilities for hikers destined for Mount Assiniboine

SOUTH CORE AND CENTRAL CORRIDOR
NATURAL ENVIRONMENT ZONE

-maintain minimum Type 3 trails over the primary backpacking routes in the park:

-Assiniboine Pass Trail
-Wonder Pass Trail
-Central Corridor (Great Divide) Trail

WILDERNESS ZONE

-maintain minimum Type 3 trails over the secondary backpacking routes in the park:

-Simpson River Trail
-Surprise Creek Trail
-Mitchell River Trail
-Eohippus Lake Trail
-Aurora Creek Trail (proposed park expansion)

Fishing.

Discussion:

-fishing in Mount Assiniboine Park is a secondary recreation activity, conducted mostly within the South Core area

-BC Parks information packages contain little to promote or encourage fishing as a recreation opportunity

-presentation of a relatively unrestricted recreational fishery would significantly enhance visitor experience in the South Core area

-Gog Lake maintains a special ambience which enhances the fly fishing experience

-guided hunting parties in the Mitchell River drainage fish Wedgewood Lake on a regular basis however stocks are of insufficient quantity to expand this opportunity

-fish stocks in the North Core area are vulnerable to over-utilization based on the large number of day-users that the area experiences: shorelines are subject to erosion and vegetation damage

ACTIONS:

.disallow commercial fish guiding within the park; natural fish stocks are incapable of supporting such demand

NORTH CORE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT ZONE

.retain a fishing closure on all lakes, based on limitations of the fishery and the fragility of shoreline vegetation

SOUTH CORE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT ZONE

.expand recreational fishing opportunities, consider a put-and-take fishery at Elizabeth Lake and Og Lake (see 4.2.4i)

.retain a recreational fishery at all lakes, with special promotion of Gog Lake for fly-fishing

WILDERNESS ZONE

.retain a recreational fishery at all lakes

Horsepacking/Riding

Discussion:

-horse use in the park is historically tied to mountain exploration, recreation and guiding

-promotion and development of horse riding services and opportunities elsewhere (Height of the Rockies, Kananaskis Country) has reduced the demand for horseback recreation within Mount Assiniboine Park

-opportunities exist to promote circle rides within the park's Wilderness Zone

-the Wilderness Zone trail system is generally more suited for dual horse/hiker use; within the Natural Environment Zone the two user groups must be separated

-use of alternate domestic pack animals, particularly llamas, is expanding elsewhere

ACTIONS:

.monitor horse use and routing regulations with adjoining park agencies to ensure consistency

.develop trail head facilities (parking and loading ramp, corrals) in cooperation with riding organizations and/or guide-outfitters or under agreement with another party

SOUTH CORE INTENSIVE RECREATION ZONE
NORTH CORE INTENSIVE RECREATION ZONE
NORTH CORE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT ZONE

.disallow pack animal use within these zones

SOUTH CORE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT ZONE

.provide a separate pack trail through the zone

.relocate O'Brien's horse camp to a location closer to the designated Assiniboine Pass pack trail

WILDERNESS ZONE

.maintain pack trails within the Simpson River, Mitchell River and Surprise Creek valleys

.encourage maintenance of pack animal facilities at Simpson River trail head and at Mitchell River trail head in cooperation with riding clubs and/or guide-outfitters

.separate packing and hiking routes within the Simpson and Mitchell River valleys where environmental conditions dictate; close the Eohippus Lake area to horses

Hunting.

Discussion:

-commercial (guided) and public (resident) recreational hunting attention focusses on Rocky Mountain bighorn sheep and Mountain goat populations in the Wilderness zone, both are impressive trophy species with international attraction

-Mount Assiniboine presents one of only a few Rocky Mountain park hunting experiences, none of which occur in the National Parks

-hunting is generally incompatible with non-consumptive recreation activities; hunting activity in the North Core and Central Corridor area potentially conflicts with late summer hikers; the summer Sunshine Village program generally operates until Labour Day

ACTIONS:

NORTH CORE INTENSIVE RECREATION ZONE
SOUTH CORE INTENSIVE RECREATION ZONE
SOUTH CORE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT ZONE

.disallow hunting within these zones

NORTH CORE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT ZONE
CENTRAL CORRIDOR NATURAL ENVIRONMENT ZONE

.adjust hunting regulations, if required, to permit hunting only after the late summer/early fall recreational hiking season is complete

WILDERNESS ZONE

.provide resident and guided hunting as a low profile recreational activity within the zone

.consider regulation changes, included a staggered Limited Entry Hunt, which will ensure continuation of a wilderness experience of the highest quality

.provide camping/shelter accommodation at designated sites (as in 5.2.2.i)

Mountain Biking.

Discussion:

-bicycling provides a low-impact, efficient and acceptable mode of access into Mount Assiniboine Park, however, as a recreation activity in the park, bicycling can be disruptive to other trail users

ACTIONS:

.disallow recreational bicycling within Mount Assiniboine Park; bicycle access to the South Core area is permissable (see 5.1.2.iii)

.provide a simple facility at which to secure bicycles used for access to park accommodations

Mountaineering.

Discussion:

-a successful climb of Mt. Assiniboine is recognized as a respectable North American mountaineering achievement

-Mt. Assiniboine's prominence to the mountaineering fraternity will remain regardless of recreational development at its base; this prominence provides substantial promotion of mountaineering as a recreation activity

-of lesser prominence to international mountaineering, but no less important as climbing opportunities, are the associated peaks and ridges which form the Mt. Assiniboine massif

ACTIONS:

.**recognize and manage mountaineering** as a recreational activity in the South Core area

.**provide base facilities** for mountaineering activity (see 5.2.2.i)

.**ensure emergency response** programs are assembled for the safety of mountaineers in the park

Ski Touring.

Discussion:

-gentle, open terrain in the North and South Core areas is perfectly suited to light ski touring and capable of attracting a wide range of skier ability

-Mount Assiniboine Lodge presents a good opportunity to comfortably introduce the beauty of the winter backcountry to park visitors

-similarly, Sunshine Village Resort presents an opportunity to introduce cross-country day skiers to the winter alpine of the North Core area

-winter routing between the North and South Core areas passes through extreme hazard avalanche terrain

-in the North Core area, attractive day skiing opportunities are presented from Sunshine Village into Rock Isle Lake on track set by the ski resort

-downhill ski runs traverse a small portion of the North Core area; such are recognized in the Zoning plan

ACTIONS:

SOUTH CORE INTENSIVE RECREATION ZONE

.manage winter base facilities within the South Core area to attract a variety of market groups

SOUTH CORE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT ZONE

.provide a variety of ski touring opportunities for all ability levels over ungroomed routes appropriately mapped and ground-marked where necessary

NORTH CORE INTENSIVE RECREATION ZONE

.permit management and operation of commercial downhill skiing as part of the Sunshine Village Ski area

NORTH CORE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT ZONE

.provide cross-country ski opportunities from Sunshine Village on groomed trails managed by the Resort

CENTRAL CORRIDOR NATURAL ENVIRONMENT ZONE

.discourage skiing within the zone

WILDERNESS ZONE

.encourage use of the lower Simpson River trail as a ski tour route from Kootenay National Park to Surprise Creek cabin

ii) NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCE APPRECIATION

Historic Study.

Discussion:

-specific human interest features of the park relate to early mountain exploration (G. Simpson), tourism (Assiniboine Lodge) and climbing (Mt. Assiniboine, Wheeler's Wonder Lodge)

ACTIONS:

.ensure public access to the Mount Assiniboine Lodge building for viewing of the feature and of displays concerning early mountaineering activity at Assiniboine

.consider Sunburst Cabin for future public presentation as a park heritage feature

Interpretation and Education.

Discussion:

-special natural features evident in the North and South Core areas provide good interpretive and educational opportunities for park visitors

-the park is used regularly for outdoor education and special skills training (eg. Avalanche Training)

-see also 5.6 Information Services

ACTIONS:

.introduce a summer interpretation program for all visitors in the South Core area, directed by the Communications Plan (see 5.6)

.present summer interpretation programs in Sunshine Meadows and the North Core area

.promote educational use of Mount Assiniboine Park using park facilities and accommodations

Viewing.

Discussion:

-within both the North and South Core areas, exceptional viewing opportunities are presented; surrounding topographic features and vegetation are classic examples of Canadian Rocky Mountain scenery

-moderate terrain within the North and South Core areas permits hiking to impressive vantage points overlooking scenic alpine meadows, lakes and mountain ranges

-a viewing platform constructed in the North Core area is an immensely popular focal point for visitors from Sunshine Village

-wildlife viewing opportunities are most evident surrounding the South Core area where elk traditionally range during summer months; within the North Core area, mountain sheep, ptarmigan and ground squirrels are common sights

ACTIONS:

SOUTH CORE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT ZONE

.facilitate viewing opportunities through the maintenance of hiking trails to popular vantage points; the Nub, Windy Ridge, Wonder Pass

.inform visitors of wildlife viewing opportunities within the zone: maintain sensitivity to the animals and to visitor safety

NORTH CORE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT ZONE

.facilitate viewing opportunities by ensuring the continued maintenance of the Rock Isle viewing platform and other key observation points

.provide information regarding specific sights and alpine features viewed from within the zone

Photography/Visual Arts.

Discussion:

-Mount Assiniboine is one of the most recognized symbols of the Canadian Rockies; depicted in countless magazines, photographs, drawings and paintings

-each season, the park attracts several individual artists and artistic groups; very few visitors leave the park without some visual record of its scenery: photographs, sketches, video tape

ACTIONS:

.promote visits to the park by artists and photographers through distribution of illustrative park information and cooperation with park permittees

.apply BC Parks policy with regard to commercial filming ventures within the park

5.3 COMMERCIAL RECREATION SERVICES

General Objective:

To encourage involvement of the private sector in the supply of outdoor recreation services which are compatible with approved management objectives for Mount Assiniboine Provincial Park.

Park Access.

.continue to offer a commercial opportunity to the private sector for the provision of helicopter transportation to park visitors

.permit horse packing only as part of an existing guide/outfitting operation and territory in the park

Lodging.

.operate Mount Assiniboine Lodge as a summer and winter backcountry, extended stay facility offering the following visitor services:

-guest rooms and cabins to existing capacities
-dining for Lodge guests
-staff accomodations within existing buildings

Hiking.

.offer commercial opportunities for the provision of hiking guide services, either as part of an existing operation or as a new permit

Horsepacking/Riding.

.encourage existing guide/outfitter operators to offer summer guiding/packing, using domestic pack animals only on designated trails within the park

Hunting.

.continue two commercial opportunities for the provision of hunting guide-outfitter services in the park

Resource Appreciation.

.consider offering a commercial opportunity for the provision of summer visitor programs for park visitors within the South Core

.promote private sector opportunities in the provision of education programs (eg. skills training), photography and filming consistent with park objectives and Division management policy

Mountaineering.

.continue to offer commercial opportunities for the provision of mountain climbing guide services:

-to any guide licenced by the A.C.M.G. and in possession of a valid Park Use Permit

Ski Touring.

.continue to offer commercial opportunities for the provision of ski touring guide services

Downhill Skiing.

.continue to permit commercial management of ski runs within the designated ski area boundary of Sunshine Village, consistent with the BC Commercial Alpine Ski Area policy

5.4 MANAGEMENT SERVICES

5.4.1 Park Administration

Objective:

To administer the park from a base of operations which is close to the major overnight destination facilities.

ACTIONS:

.re-construct Park headquarters and staff accomodations within the Intensive Recreation Zone, recognizing architectural objectives (see 4.2.5) and located close to accommodation and air access facilities

5.4.2 Operations Function

Objective:

To ensure a BC Parks presence within Mount Assiniboine Park for the provision of service and safety to park visitors, the monitoring and management of park resources and the assurance of Park Act compliance.

ACTIONS:

.provide summer/winter staff presence in all zones of the park (relative to use levels)

.maintain park facilities and regulate public use to ensure visitor safety and convenience

.enforce Park Act regulations and monitor Park Use Permittees

.collect visitor data and survey information

.coordinate emergency response and evacuation programs

.assure all park use permittee operations reflect the spirit and intent of the Park Master Plan.

5.5 INFORMATION SERVICES

General Objective:

To provide high quality, comprehensive information to park visitors and potential park visitors designed to:

i) heighten public awareness regarding Mount Assiniboine Provincial

Park and its role in the conservation of special natural and cultural features,
ii) inform about visitor opportunities and facilities, and,
iii) assure visitor safety.

ACTIONS:

.formulate a Communications Plan which will identify:
.interpretive features, programs and presentations,
.a signing and display strategy to include all access routes, facilities and accomodations,
.printed information for in-park distribution
.heighten public awareness of Mount Assiniboine Park and it's role as a BC Park.

.provide contemporary, high-standard information relative to park trails and facilities for display at key locations as identified in the Communications Plan

SOUTH CORE INTENSIVE RECREATION ZONE

.construct an Information Kiosk within this zone

NORTH CORE NATURAL ENVIRONMENT ZONE

.ensure continued presentation of BC Parks information on Information Displays within the zone

.maintain BC Parks presence during the summer season to provide information and interpretive service to park visitors, particularly those through-hiking to other park destinations (eg. South Core area, Eohippus Lake)

5.6 MARKETING

General Objective:

To attract a wide range of visitors to Mount Assiniboine Park, to deliver essential recreation services and facilities, and to promote visitor participation in backcountry recreation activities.

5.6.1 Markets

Discussion:

-generally speaking, informal research and analysis indicates that the South Core area will continue to attract two primary user groups: young, single, self-reliant hiking, skiing and climbing recreationists and older, married or single, less self-reliant hiking/skiing visitors

-facilities available at Mount Assiniboine Lodge and Sunshine Village permit use of the park by groups which are more dependant on personal service and attention

-most visitors to the South Core area are from Alberta/BC; the Lodge markets over a broader area, attracting visitors from eastern Canada, the US and Europe.

-secondary user groups in the park are horseriders (including hunters), families and organized associations

-the North Core area attracts a full range of local, regional, distant and overseas day-use visitors (via Banff National Park)

ACTIONS:

.continue marketing efforts toward those most attracted to Mount Assiniboine Park; young/active recreationists, older/family/less active hikers and naturalists

.expand marketing efforts, in cooperation with Mount Assiniboine Lodge and Sunshine Village, to include visits by young families and the elderly which can be accommodated within existing park lodge facilities

.design marketing initiatives to match targeted market groups with the appropriate package of backcountry experiences and services that they seek

5.6.2 Services

Discussion:

-shifts in user profiles, expectations and park access methods have resulted in a dependance on visitor services in the park which require substantial involvement of staff

-to meet recreation management objectives, visitor services must be delivered throughout the Intensive Recreation and Natural Environment Zones of the park

-increasing winter and spring use in the South Core area requires the delivery of visitor services by BC Parks over an expanded season

ACTIONS:

.maintain BC Parks presence through the provision of backcountry ranger services

.deliver a contemporary range of recreation services through the private and public sectors intended to heighten visitor satisfaction within the park

.expand the delivery season of visitor services to winter and spring months

5.6.3 Presentation of Recreation Opportunities

Discussion:

-visitors to the park generally arrive for a fixed period of time, with certain expectations and committment to participate in some form of outdoor recreation activity

-the range of outdoor recreation activities offered to the visitor must complement the range of visitor types attracted to the park

ACTIONS:

.present "packaged" outdoor recreation opportunities designed to encourage participation by all Mount Assiniboine Park visitors:

BACKCOUNTRY:

Multi-Day Trips.

Lodge/Camping.

.Backcountry Lodge vacation: 3 to 8 day backcountry lodge vacation. Forms the base for a variety of recreation activities. Lodge user enjoys high calibre amenities such as meals, heat, running water, private accommodation and rental equipment. Winter and summer seasons.

.Backcountry Cabin vacation: 2 to multi-day backcountry vacation. Naiset cabins provide rustic cabin accommodation. Forms a base of operation for other activities. Winter and summer seasons. Additionally, the Hind Hut provides rustic cabin accommodation for climbers on the Mount Assiniboine massif.

.Backcountry Camping vacation: 2 to multi-day camping experience using formal Park campgrounds in the South Core area and Eohippus Lake. Group camping throughout the South Core area. Summer season.

Backpacking.

.2 to 4 day backpacking treks through the Wilderness and Natural Environment zones of the park:

-Central Corridor (Great Divide) Trail
South core, to Porcupine Camp, to North core (Sunshine Village)
-Eohippus Lake
North core, to Eohippus Lake, Egypt Lake, rtn.
-Simpson River Circle
South core, to Ferro Pass, Rock Lake, Simpson River, Central Corridor, to North/South Core
-Mount Assiniboine Circle

South core, to Marvel Pass, Aurora Creek to Mitchell River, to South core

-Kananaskis/Banff/Assiniboine Trek
Spray Lake, to Assiniboine Pass, South Core, Wonder Pass, to Spray Lake

Horsepacking/Riding.

.5 to 6 day recreational horse-trekking through the Natural Environment and Wilderness zones:

-Simpson River Valley
-Mitchell River Valley
-Assiniboine Pass-Og Pass Circle trail

Single Day Trips.

Hikes.

.half-day and full day hikes to high-interest areas within the North Core and South Core areas:

-Rock Isle Basin Trails
.sub-alpine lakes, alpine vegetation
-Sunshine Meadows Trail
.alpine vegetation
-Nublet Vista Trail
.view of the Assiniboine massif, South Core
-Mt. Cautley Skyline Trail
.alpine, moderately exposed ridge walk
-Magog Shoreline Trail
.sub-alpine lake, fishing opportunities
-Gog Lake Trail
.sub-alpine lake, unique setting
-3 Lakes Circle Trail
.Sunburst, Cerulean, and Elizabeth Lakes
-Windy Ridge Trail
.landscape views, alpine features

Fishing.

.day-fishing opportunities exist within the South Core area:

-Elizabeth Lake put-and-take
-Og Lake put-and-take
-Cerulean Lake "trophy"
-Gog Lake fly fishing
-Sunburst Lake put-and-take

Mountain Climbing.

.day climbs to a variety of mountain peaks may be accomplished from any of the accommodation bases in the South core area:

Ski Trips.

.day ski touring opportunities which exist throughout the South Core area:

-Og Meadows
-Cautley Meadows
-Magog Lake

.day cross-country skiing within the North Core area from Sunshine Village Resort:

-Rock Isle Basin

SPECIAL FEATURE APPRECIATION

Cultural Features.

.scheduled public access to Mount Assiniboine Lodge, in cooperation with the permittee, to foster appreciation for the historical development of park facilities and operations

.public access to heritage buildings throughout the South Core area

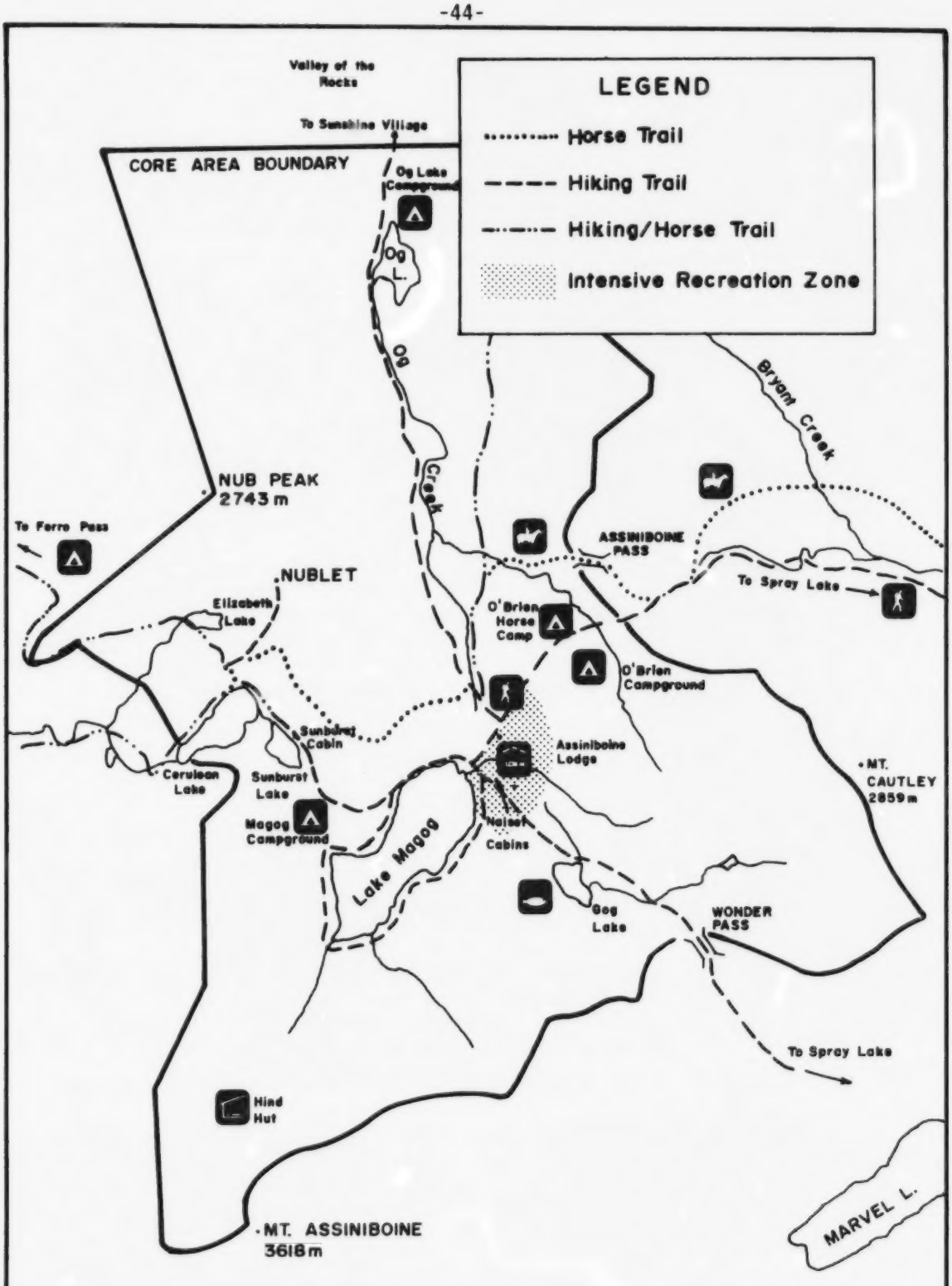
Interpretive and Education.

.scheduled interpretive programs within the North and South Core areas

.coordinated information displays designed to inform and educate park visitors about the park

.education and training opportunities to encourage group visits to the park;

i) nature seminars
ii) outdoor skills training
iii) educational field trips



MOUNT ASSINIBOINE PROVINCIAL PARK
South Core Area Detail

NORTH

4

6.0 PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

6.1 CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT

Priority 1 items: (1 - 3 year program)

.UPGRADE MAGOG RIM CAMPGROUND to provide tables, shelter, water and group camping

.UPGRADE NAISET CABINS to ensure continued preservation and operation as rustic public shelter

.upgrade and MAINTAIN TYPE 3 TRAILS between the North and South Core Areas (p.27)

.upgrade and improve the NUB TRAIL

.construct an INFORMATION KIOSK within the South Core Intensive Recreation Zone

Priority 2 items: (3 - 5 year program)

.upgrade LOW-SERVICE PORCUPINE CAMPGROUND to provide shelter

.RELOCATE O'BRIEN'S HORSE CAMP; provide dual use as GROUP CAMPGROUND

.construct a TYPE 3 BACKPACKING TRAIL to Eohippus Lake

.construct LOW-IMPACT CAMPGROUND at Eohippus Lake

.construct a COOKING SHELTER AT NAISET

Priority 3 items: (5+ year program)

.construct LOW-SERVICE WEDGEWOOD LAKE CAMPGROUND

.construct a TYPE 3 BACKPACKING TRAIL along Aurora Creek (park expansion)

6.2 RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Priority 1 items:

.formulate a VEGETATION MANAGEMENT PLAN for all zones

.investigate and PROVIDE DEPENDABLE WATER SUPPLY in the Central Corridor

.ADJUST HUNTING REGULATIONS to recognize fall recreational hiking use

.investigate and provide FIREWOOD SUPPLY SOURCES outside the South Core

Priority 2 items:

.INVESTIGATE WINTER WATER SUPPLY OPTIONS for Mount Assiniboine Lodge

.introduce a staggered LIMITED ENTRY HUNT for all resident hunters

.provide a PUT AND TAKE FISHERY at core area Lakes

6.3 VISITOR SERVICES

Priority 1 items:

.formulate a PARK COMMUNICATIONS PLAN to address Interpretation themes, Signing, park profile and visitor programing

.formulate an ANNUAL MANAGEMENT PLAN for the park

.introduce INTERPRETIVE PROGRAMS within the South Core area

Priority 2 items:

.initiate MARKETING PROGRAMS to expand awareness of the park's outdoor recreation opportunities

.RECORD AND MAP SKI TRAILS within the South Core area

.REGULATE HELICOPTER LANDING DAYS, TIMES AND NUMBERS

.INTRODUCE COMMERCIAL SKI AREA MANAGEMENT policies in the North Core Intensive Recreation Zone

Priority 3 items:

.investigate INTERPRETATION OPPORTUNITIES at Sunburst Cabin

6.4 PLANNING

Priority 1 items:

.nominate Mount Assiniboine Park for WORLD HERITAGE SITE STATUS

.ADVANCE THE EXPANSION PROPOSAL for Mount Assiniboine Park

.participate in EVALUATION OF WATER SUPPLY OPTIONS to Sunshine Village

.distribute Annual Public Updates of achievement toward implementation of the park master plan.

Priority 2 items:

.NEGOTIATE TRAIL MANAGEMENT AGREEMENT between adjoining park agencies